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SOCIAL CARE WORKFORCE RESEARCH UNIT

Social Care Workforce Periodical

ADULT CARE WORKERS AT THE UPPER END OF THE 'THIRD AGE' (60-75) IN ENGLAND

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Executive Summary

The 'New Deal' Labour policies in the UK have the explicit aim of reducing unemployment among older workers (HM Treasury 2003, Department of Work and Pensions 2005), and older people's participation in the labour force has increased during the past decade or so (Hotopp 2007). However, despite recent policies and legislation promoting age-friendly employment, the effects of age discrimination are still evident in the hiring, promotion, retention and opportunities for career development among older workers, reflecting wider societal perceptions (Weller 2007, Adams 2004). In addition to the general challenges faced by older people seeking to join and stay in work, some groups face additional cultural, socio-economic and other barriers. It is important, as with all other classifications, to emphasise that older workers are not a homogenous group; they differ by a number of characteristics. In particular, education, socio-economic status, gender and ethnic backgrounds are all important factors, which interact with age and employability. For example, older Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) workers, as well as female older workers, are reported to face double jeopardy in employment, when ageist attitudes combine with other discrimination or stereotyping (Watson *et al.* 2003, Moore 2009).

In this issue of the *Social Care Workforce Periodical* (SCWP) we aim to investigate empirical data on a sample of older workers in the adult social care sector in England, identified through the NMDS-SC, December 2009 release. The definitions of 'older workers' or 'mature workers' are elastic and different researchers use different age groupings. However, a consensus has been reached in regarding workers aged 50 years or over as 'third age' while workers aged 20 to 49 years old may be referred to as 'prime age' or second age. Here the aim is to focus on a particular group of this 'third age', those aged 60 to 75, and compare their characteristics and profile to the younger cohorts aged 50-55 and 55-60 years. The purpose is to examine the changing profile among these three closely related groups and investigate the similarities and differences between those who stay working in the care sector after reaching the age of 60, significant as the age at which women may draw their state retirement pension.

This analysis uses a sample of 84,041 unique workers records between the age of 16 and 75 years who work in the adult social care sector in England. In total, records were available for 11,923 workers in the age band 50-54; 10,871 in the age band 55-59 and 10,267 workers in the age band 60-75;[1] constituting 14.2%, 12.9% and 12.2% of the workforce respectively.

It is clear from the data that among social care workers employed by local authorities, proportions of workers in their third age decline progressively with greater age. However, the picture is significantly different for the voluntary sector (where the highest proportions of 60-75 year-old workers are employed, at 14%). Here there is a declining trend of those employed in the 50-54 to 55-59 age groups, but then a steep increase in the oldest group, reflecting the possible attraction of the voluntary sector to older workers (as identified in the

[1] In this analysis we only included up to and inclusive of age 75 as a data quality control measure.

literature). Representation of all 'third age' workers is highest in the Midlands and lowest in the South of England. The analysis indicates a higher prevalence of all third age workers among large adult care providers, which may be linked to positive HR practices and policies (forbidding age discrimination or providing flexible employment conditions), as well as the potential for greater or more varied work opportunities in larger settings. However, the gap between the proportions of the oldest group (60-75) and younger 'third age' groups is widest among large and small (micro) social care providers.

Growing older and moving towards the 'third age' is usually characterized by a shift from full-time employment to more flexible arrangements (Clayton 2007). Such shifts in work arrangements are considered by some to signify a specific transition, possibly including actual tasks performed. The current analysis shows that as age increases the proportion of people working part-time increases from 48 to 58 percent. However, 'other' work arrangements are highly evident among the oldest group, at 7.6 percent. The findings may also suggest some job-shifting, possibly indicating downward job mobility, particularly among managerial roles, as they age. However, such observations may relate to the characteristics of workers who leave at age 60 and whether there are significant variations by job roles. Direct care workers, however, appear to keep their job roles as they move to the ages of 60-75, more research on employers and workers' perceptions of 'suitable' roles for older workers is need to provide more explanations of these findings.

Clear indications of continuity of work in the third age versus new recruitment to the care sector at this age are evident. Older workers often have long work histories within both the care sector and with their current employers; this is reflected in well-documented observations of the low level of recruitment of older workers to the sector. On a more detailed level, male white workers are over-represented among 60-75 year-old workers in social care when compared to females and BME groups. This suggests the possible impact of ethnicity and gender on the perceptions of employers and workers, as well in terms of family responsibilities, cultural expectations and acceptance, and later age health inequalities.

With the secondary position of the care sector in the labour market and the tendency of the oldest cohort of workers to be less formally qualified than the previous two cohorts, it is hard to interpret the high participation of older workers in the sector. It may be a sign of active involvement and job satisfaction with the sector, or of limited options in other spheres of employment and a need for income and pension contributions. Further research on the motivations of older workers in this sector would help to establish this.

Introduction

Recognition of the significance of older people in employment has gained considerable momentum during the past few decades. Despite unmistakable evidence of population ageing, the attention of policy and research to its implications for the workforce and employment in latter age is minuscule in comparison to the attention given to the consequences of this process on long term care needs (Watson, Manthorpe and Andrews 2003). However, population ageing brings several, multifaceted challenges to workforce dynamics in terms of facilitating the retention of older people who wish to continue in employment as they age. In addition to prejudice and stereotyping, a number of socio-economic, cultural and institutional factors may negatively influence older people's participation in employment. Moreover, the definition of what constitutes 'old' age varies considerably by both sector and individual characteristics (such as gender and ethnicity). For example, in the computer industry, 35 may be considered old (Clayton 2007, Platman 2009). As a way of defining older workers, the phrase 'third age' has been used widely in research since the late 1970s. The third age refers to the stage of life when most people may be moving towards the end of their careers and the use of this term to refer workers aged 50 years or over is common among many researchers.

The 'New Deal' Labour policies in the UK have the explicit aim of reducing unemployment for older workers (HM Treasury 2003, Department of Work and Pensions 2005). However, despite recent policies and legislation promoting age-friendly employment, the effects of age discrimination are still evident and its effect is experienced through problems with job security, promotion and retention among others (Weller 2007, Adams 2004). In addition to general challenges faced by older people to join and stay in work, some groups face additional cultural, socio-economic and other barriers. Up to late 1997, Campbell (1999) showed that male employment among those aged 55-65 had fallen sharply since 1979, particularly among those with the lowest or no educational qualifications. However, upward employment trends were observed during the last decade amongst older men (Hotopp 2005).

In the UK, Brooke and Taylor (2005) argue that policies with broader remits are needed to enable older people to participate in the workforce. They suggest that policies directed at older workers alone might ignore other age and age-group dynamics within workplaces. Thus it is important to understand specific workforce inter-age dynamics and perceptions as well as skills that different age groups may bring to the workplace.

There is also the different matter of 'employing' and 'hiring' older workers. Market-based rationales can explain this phenomenon, where employers tend to hire younger rather than older workers. Two factors may come into play, first the necessity for up-to-date qualifications and training and the second the importance of productivity growth. For example, Adams (2004) shows that US laws forbidding age discrimination, which have reduced exit through early

retirement and have increased the length of employment, have no influence at all on the probability of older workers being hired. In the UK context, Daniel and Heywood (2007) suggest that in addition to targeting older workers, it is important to recognize the characteristics of employers likely to employ older workers so that these may be more widely propagated.

It is important, as with all other classifications, to emphasise that older workers are not a homogenous group; they differ by a number of characteristics. In particular, education, socio-economic status, gender and ethnic backgrounds are all important factors, which interact with age and employability. For example, older Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) workers, as well as female older workers, are reported to face double jeopardy in employment as they are faced with more incidences of prejudicial attitudes from employers (Watson *et al.* 2003, Moore 2009).

Moreover, research across the globe identifies a negative correlation between wages and advancing age of workers, which is evident across a range of occupational groups (for example, Aubert *et al*. 2006). This suggests that skills may lose their validity ('shelf-life') over time, particularly with the increasing influence of information technology; qualifications gained some time ago may not protect against the labour-market consequences of ageing. In the care sector, health and risk issues, and possibly greater demands by commissioners and regulators for specific qualifications such as NVQs, may form barriers by directly or indirectly excluding older workers from the whole workforce or from particular job roles. Similarly, the gendered nature of care work may be more appealing to older women than to men.

In the care sector, some limited attention has recently been paid to the role of older workers as an opportunity to meet the incremental demands for their work (Manthorpe and Moriarty 2009). In the United States (US), Hwalek and colleagues (2008) examined the problems related to employing older workers (55 years or more) in frontline jobs in the care sector from both the employers' and employees' perspectives. They found that older workers remain interested in career development and learning new skills. The researchers suggested further investment in training low-income older people to enable them to participate in the long-term care workforce. However, they also found that there are inherent as well as 'genuine' deterrents to hiring older people to the care sector; the most prevalent barrier was employers' perception of the inability of older workers to use technology and a perceived higher cost associated with hiring this group of workers.

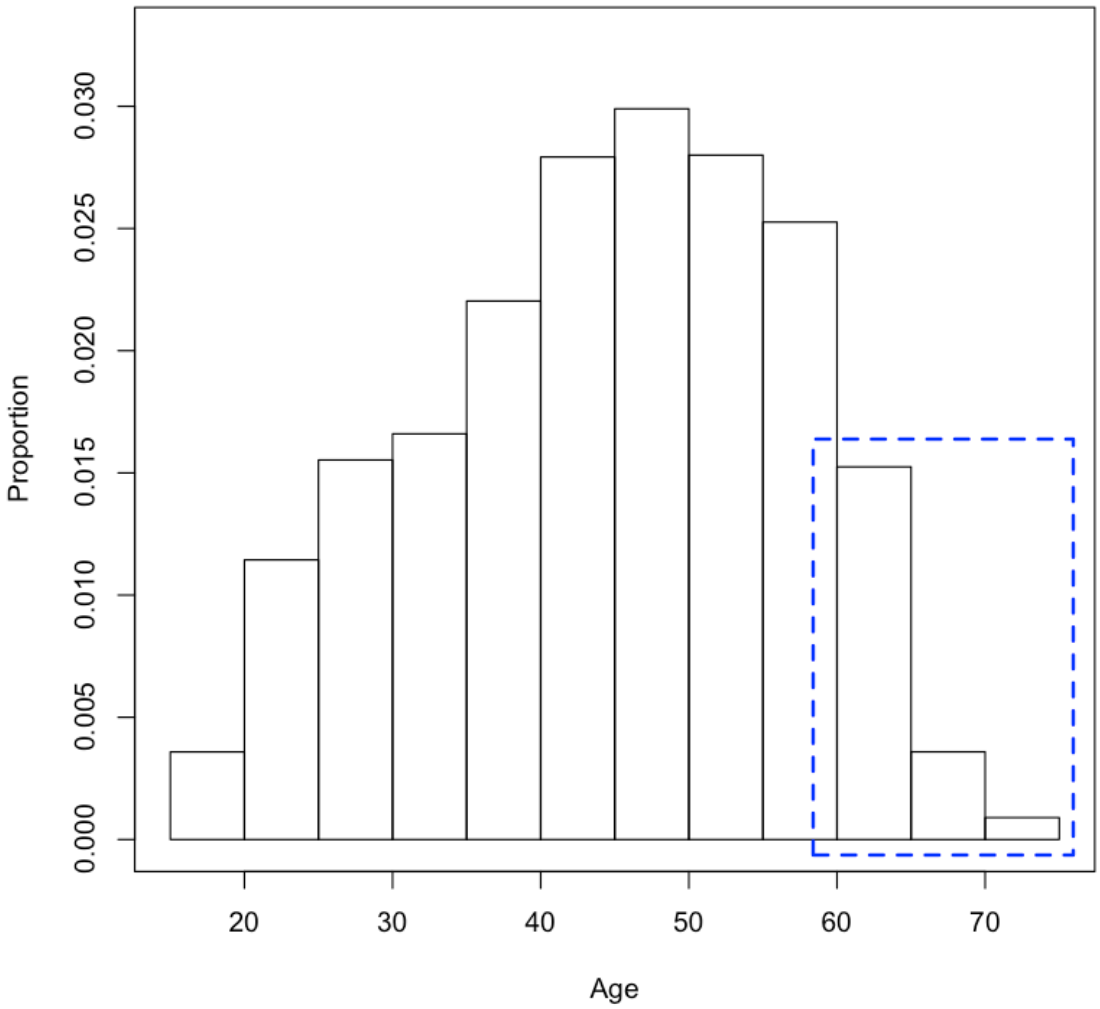
Methods

In this issue of *Social Care Workforce Periodical* (SCWP) we aim to investigate the characteristics of older workers in the adult social care sector in England, through the use of a large sample identified through the NMDS-SC, December 2009 release. The definitions 'older workers' and 'mature workers' are elastic and different researchers use different age groupings; however, there is some consensus about regarding workers aged 50 years or more as of the 'third age', with workers of 20 to 49 years old referred to as being in the 'prime age' group. Here the aim is to focus on a particular group of this 'third age' cohort, those aged 60 to 75 years, and to compare their characteristics and profile with the younger groups, of 50-55 and 55-60 years. The purpose is to examine the changing profiles among these three closely-related groups and investigate the similarities and differences between those who stay working in the care sector after reaching the age of 60 and those in younger age bands. Are job roles undertaken by this older group particularly different from those performed by the younger 'third age' workers? Similarly, which sectors attract and manage to retain older workers? And, equally importantly, is the gender and ethnic profile of this group different from the younger 'third age' groups?

The current analysis uses a sample of 84,041 unique worker records of workers aged between 16 and 75 who work in the adult social care sector in England. The distribution of these workers by age is presented in Figure 1: 12.2 percent were between the ages of 60 and 75, and this group is highlighted in the graph by the blue rectangle with broken lines.

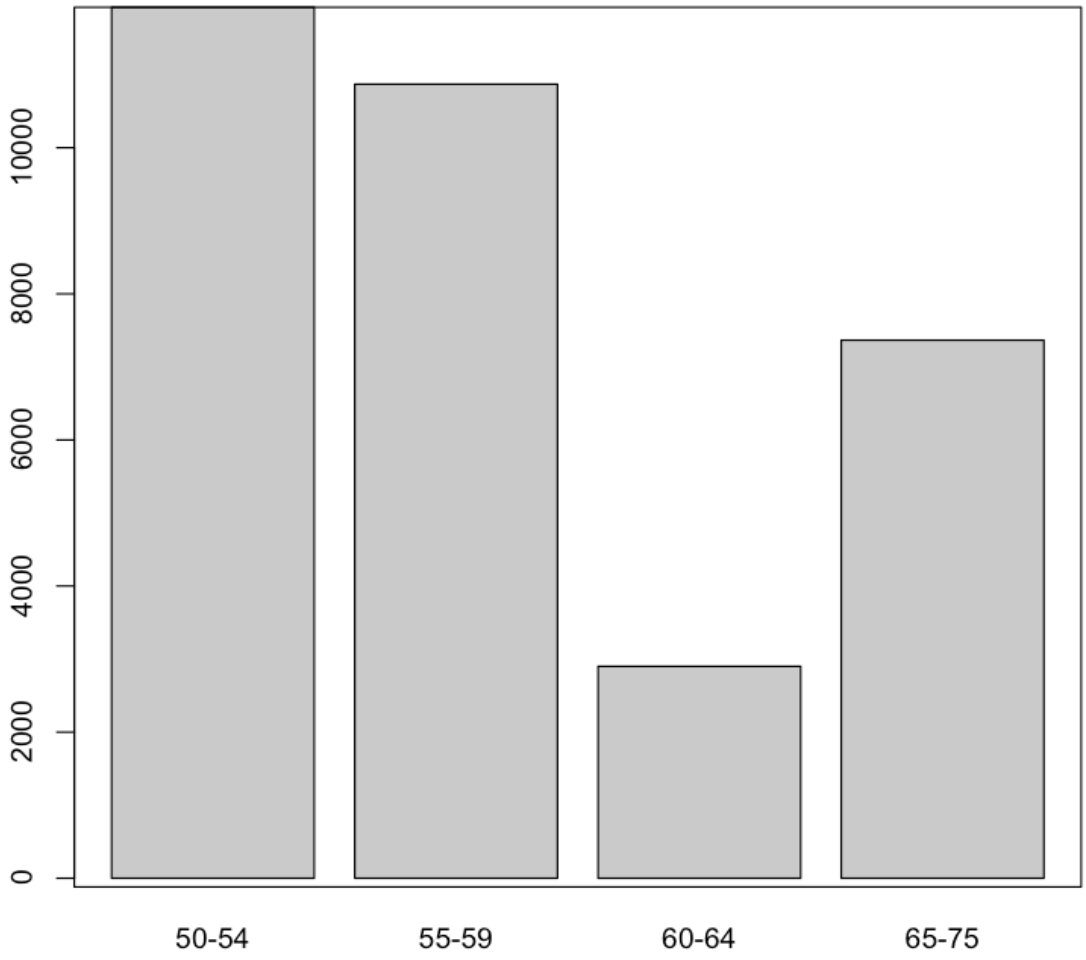
A number of statistical techniques are used in this issue to investigate the prevalence of 'third age' workers, and particularly those 60-75, among different worker groups. The focus is on a comparison of the oldest group to the previous two 'cohorts' of workers (namely those in the age groups 50-54 and 55-59), in order to construct a hypothesis related to observed changes in third age workers in relation to their individual and employment characteristics as we progress from one age group to the next.

Figure 1 Distribution of adult social care workers in England by age groups



The logic behind the choice of 50-54 and 55-59 as comparison groups is that these are the natural age groups, which will feed into the older groups in the next 5 to 10 years. This is may be particularly true if hiring of older people remains relatively low as deducted from the literature (Daniel and Heywood 2007). Plotting the distribution of older workers by five-year age groups, we can see from Figure 2 that the age group 60-64 is significantly smaller than the other three groups, therefore we will joining this with the oldest group (65-75) in the rest of the analysis. In total, records concerning 11,923 workers aged 50-54, 10,871 aged 55-59 and 10,267 workers aged 60-75 were investigated: constituting 14.2 percent, 12.9 percent and 12.2 percent respectively of the total adult care workforce (16-75).

Figure 2 Distribution of 'third age' workers by five-year age groups



Findings

Where do 'third age' workers work?

The NMDS-SC helps identify workers' place of work at a number of levels, including sector, region and establishment size.[2] In the following sub-sections we examine whether different groups of 'third age' workers vary in terms of where they work in relation to sector, region and establishment size.

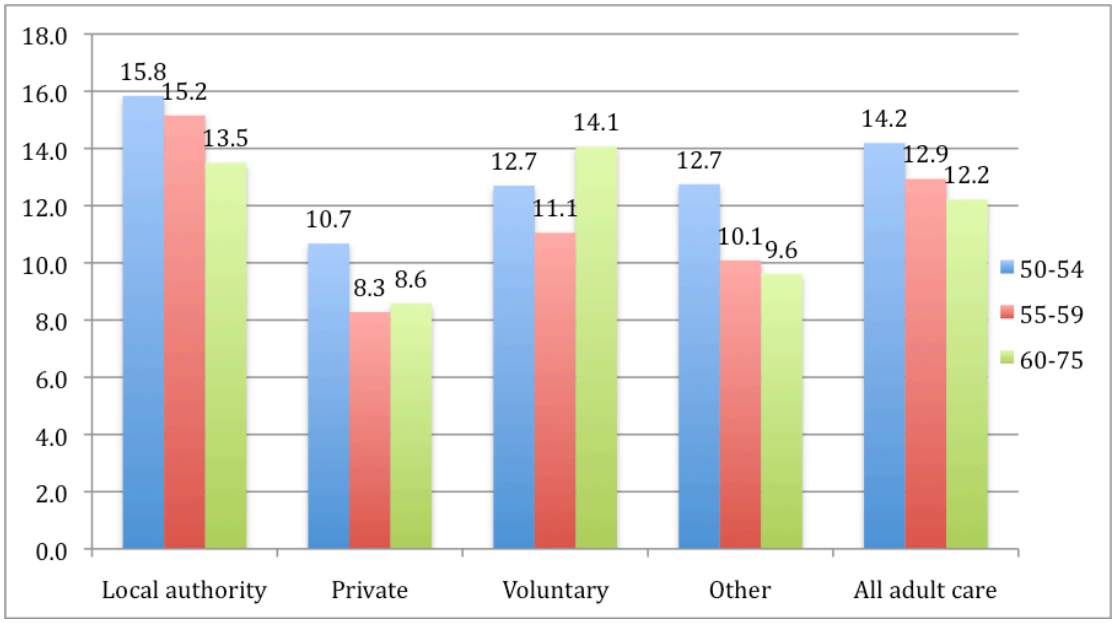
Sector

The literature reveals the attraction of the voluntary sector to both very young and much older workers. In the care sector, the role of the voluntary sector remains important in the map of care provision, with long-standing charities providing significant support to different groups of users (HM Treasury 2002, House of Commons 2006) including registered social care provision in the form of care homes and day care services, which are employers of care staff at all levels.

Figure 3 presents the prevalence of each of the three sub groups of the 'third age' as proportionate to the adult care workforce among different forms of providers: the local authority, private, and voluntary sectors. It is clear from the data that in local authorities, the proportion of older workers gradually declines as workers approach the third age. However, the picture is significantly different for the voluntary sector (with the highest proportion of workers aged 60-75 years, at 14%), where there is a declining trend among the age groups 50-54 and 55-59 years but then a steep increase in the oldest group, reflecting the possible attraction of the voluntary sector to older workers as identified in the literature.

[2] It should be noted that currently NMDS-SC under-represents the statutory sector and over-represents the independent sector. Similarly, it under-represents 'micro' employers (mainly users who employ their own staff). For full discussion of these limitations please refer to Issues 2 and 3 of SCWP (Hussein 2009 and 2010).

Figure 3 Prevalence of each group of 'third age' by sector of work



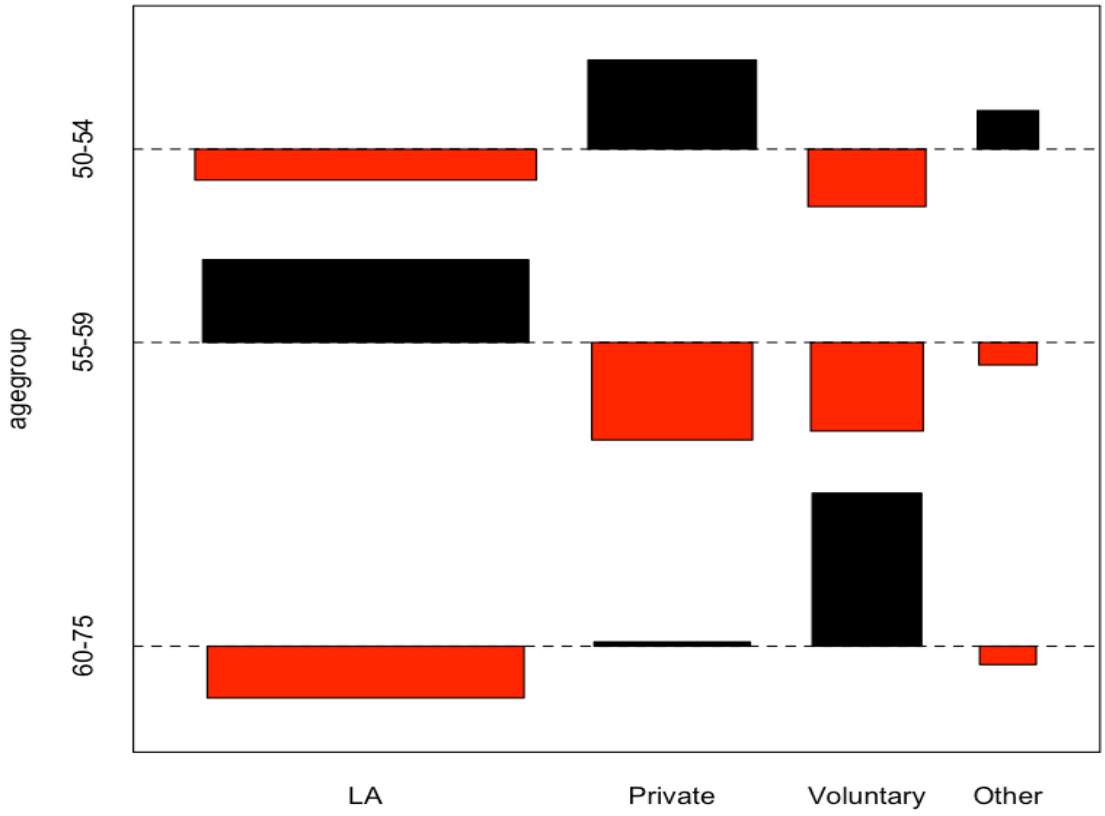
It should be noted that the data here provide information on paid workers within the voluntary sector, not on volunteers. However, this sector with its workforce dynamics and intrinsic benefits may appeal to wider groups of people, including older workers aged 60-75. Voluntary organizations have been described as 'spaces of hope' and are thought to improve self-confidence (Baines and Hardill 2008).

If we examine the variations among the three groups which constitute 'third age' workers, Table 1 shows that the distribution of older workers 60-75 is interestingly similar to the youngest third age group (50-54) and both are considerably different from the middle group aged 55-59. The data show that the proportion of workers in the oldest and youngest age tiers who work in local authorities is almost identical, except that the proportion of those workers in the voluntary sector is highest for the 60-75 group followed by 50-54. Around three quarters of those aged 55-59 work in local authorities. These variations are visualized in Figure 3 below, and they are significantly different (χ^2= 94.8, P<0.001).

Table 1 Distribution of 'third age' workers by age groups and sector of work

	'Third age' workers		
Sector	50-54	55-59	60-75
Local authorities	70.8	74.3	70.1
Private	18.7	15.9	17.5
Voluntary	8.0	7.6	10.2
Other	2.5	2.2	2.2
Number of workers	11,923	10,871	10,267

Figure 4 Cohen-Friendly visual representation plot of the association between age groups of the 'third age' and sector‡ of work

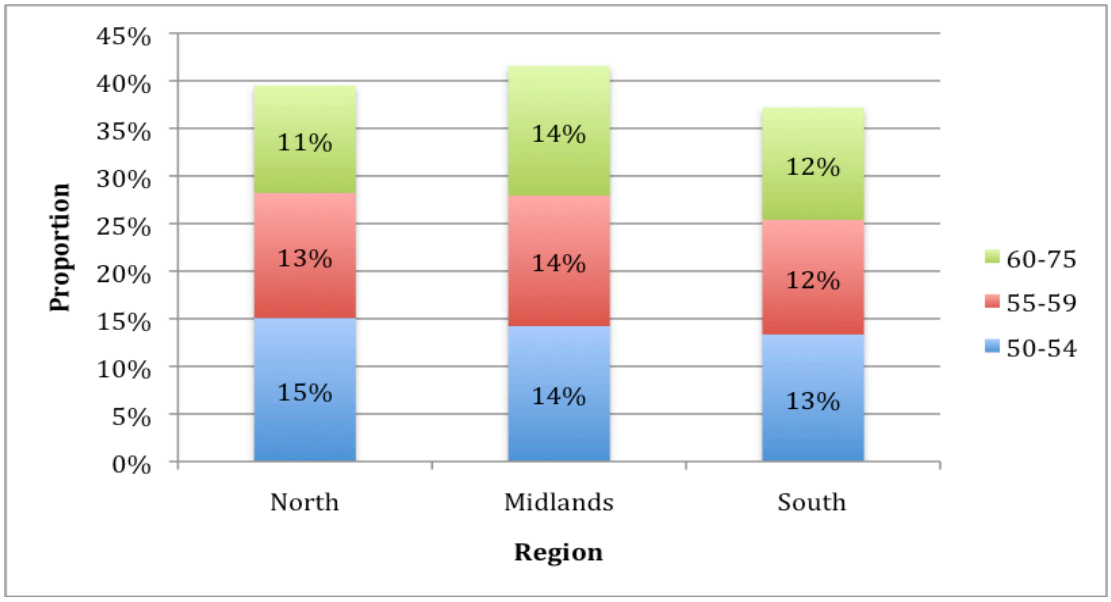


‡ LA: Local Authorities

Region

Examining the prevalence of older workers (60-75) by region, the data show that they are significantly more dominant in the Midlands, at 14 percent, and least common in the North, at 11 percent; χ^2= 58.4, P<0.001. Figure 5 further shows that the representation of all 'third age' workers is highest in the Midlands and lowest in the South of England.

Figure 5 Proportions of 'third age' workers by region[3] and age sub-groups



It is well established that life expectancy is higher, and deprivation is lower, in the South of England, while the Midlands region is characterized by high deprivation and lower life expectancy (Doran *et al.* 2006). These local demographics may affect the need for paid employment at older age as well as the availability of jobs accessible to older workers. Given the secondary nature of the care workforce in England - due to its low pay and sometimes unattractive working conditions (Anderson 2007, Hussein *et al.* 2010) – this may suggest that some of the older workers who work in the care sector in Midlands might be those in need of paid employment and unable to secure employment elsewhere.

Establishment size

The literature reflects some possible links between establishment, or firm, size and degree of accepting or retaining older people as workers. For example, a large-scale survey of managers and directors of large firms in the UK (500 or more employees) by Taylor and Walker (1998) revealed that employers often perceived older workers as incapable of heavy physical activities, difficult to train and possibly resentful taking orders from younger people. In a more recent but smaller study, Brooke and Taylor (2005) found that in both Australia and the UK, age-stereotyping is still prevalent in large firms, with a tendency among employers to prefer younger workers for skills development and to offer redundancy packages to older workers. They also suggested that small to medium sized companies may appreciate the potential for older workers, particularly if they have been with the same company for a long period of time, to preserve organizational knowledge. However, there is very limited research exploring whether these perceptions differ by establishment size or sector and whether smaller firms may allow a more personal approach, facilitating the retention of workers with different characteristics (including older workers).

[3] Region is recoded to 'North': North, North West, North East and Yorkshire and Humberside; 'Midlands': East Midlands and West Midlands; and 'South': London, South East and South West.

However, data presented in Table 2 point to a larger prevalence of all third age workers among large adult care providers, which may be linked to tighter regulations and positive human resources practices as well as more opportunities for job moves or task adaptation in larger settings. However, the gap between the oldest group (60-75) and younger 'third age' groups is widest among large and micro providers, particularly when focusing on the age group 55-59 (χ^2= 20.6, p=0.002). This suggests that it is not only large employers that may be more flexible or positive in approach to older workers.

Table 2 Percentage of 'third age' workers by age subgroups out of all adult care workers in different establishment sizes[4]

Establishment size	Third age workers		
	50-54	55-59	60-75
Micro	14.5	12.2	10.5
Small	13.7	12.7	12.5
Medium	13.5	12.0	12.2
Large	16.0	15.5	13.7

Local or wider

NMDS-SC contains information on distance travelled to work. This information is used as a proxy of how close to their home or locality older people work. Plotting the distribution of different groups of 'third age' workers by distance travelled to work shows a tendency among the oldest group not to travel long distances (particularly 25 miles or more; see Table 3). Although these observations are significant, the magnitude of the difference is not large and they are only significant on a lower level (χ^2= 28.9, p=0.01), suggesting that workers aged 50 or more tend to work more locally. These findings may be related to ability to drive and to car ownership or availability, which may be lower among certain groups of older workers, such as women.

Table 3 Distribution of 'third age' workers by age groups and distance travelled to work

Distance travelled to work	Third age workers		
	50-54	55-59	60-75
Under 1 mile	20.2	20.8	22
1 to under 2 miles	16.8	16.7	17.6
2 to under 5 miles	28.9	28.8	28.9
5 to under 10 miles	17.1	16.9	16.1
10 to under 25 miles	12.9	12.7	12.2
25 miles or more	4.0	4.1	3.2
Number of workers‡	9,209	8,490	7,864

‡ Excluding missing values

[4] Establishment size is grouped as follows: micro employers = less than 10 staff members, small = 10-49 staff members, medium = 50-199 and large = 200 or more staff members.

Work Arrangements

Moving into the 'third age' is usually characterized by a shift from full-time employment to more flexible arrangements (Clayton 2007). Such shifts in work arrangements are considered by some to signify a specific transition, possibly including a change in actual jobs performed. For example, it may not be possible to work in one's original profession on a part time basis so there may be a need to take up other jobs at an older age which would not have been previously considered. Such changes may impact on both employers and employees; some employers may use older workers for occasional or sporadic work, such as agency work in social care (Cornes *et al.* 2010). At the same time, the creation of part-time, temporary and flexible work arrangements may be the only way of enabling some older workers to participate in employment.

Full or part-time

Table 4 and Figure 6 show that as age increases the proportion of people working part-time increases from 48 to 58 percent. However, other work arrangements are common among the oldest group, at 7.6 percent; these variations are significant (Pearson's χ^2= 386.5, p<0.001).

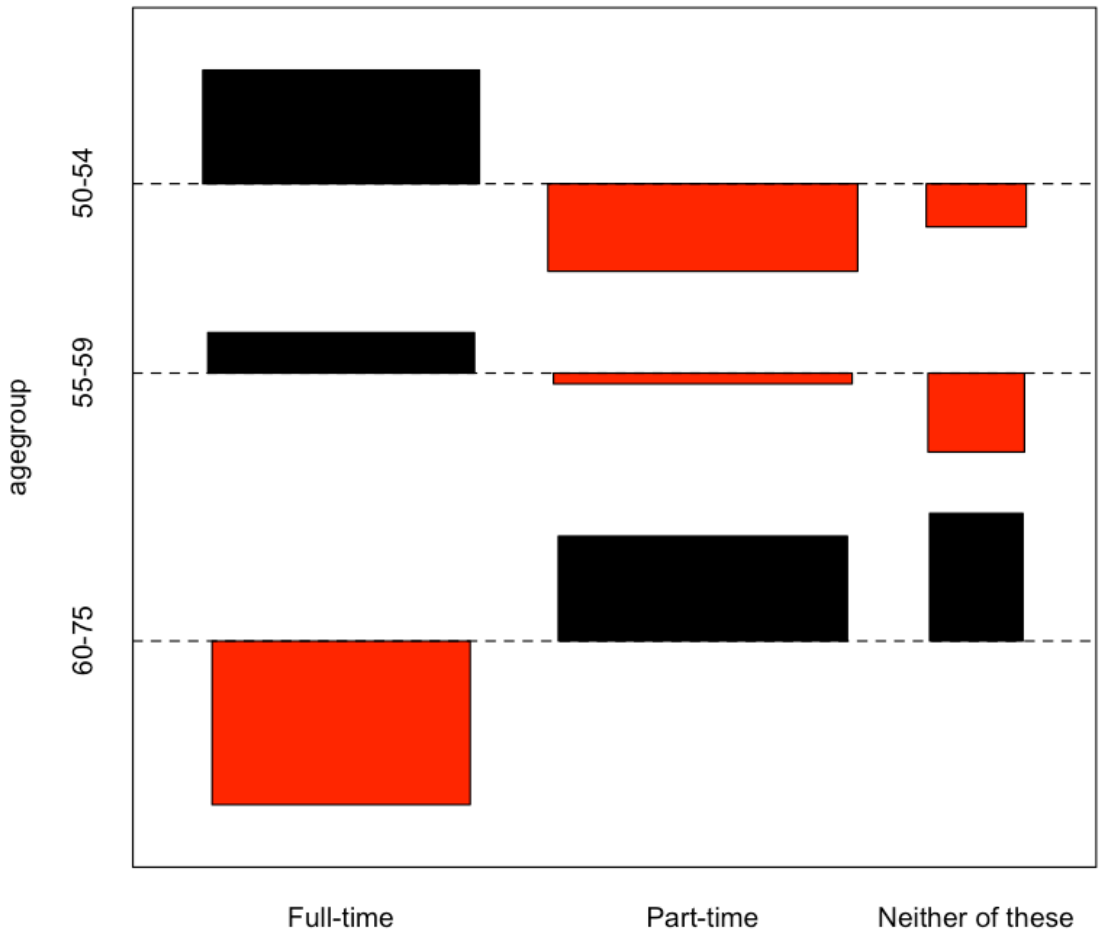
Table 4 Distribution of 'third age' workers by work pattern, whether full, part time or other arrangement

	'Third age' workers		
Work pattern	50-54	55-59	60-75
Full-time	46.8	43.7	34.5
Part-time	48.4	52.1	57.9
Neither of these	4.8	4.2	7.6
Number of workers‡	10,593	9,858	9,233

‡ Excluding missing values

Figure 6 shows the significance of part-time and other arrangements of work for the oldest group aged 60-75, and the under-representation of full-time work relative to the other, younger, third age groups.

Figure 6 Cohen-Friendly association plot between age and work pattern



Permanent or temporary

In terms of whether workers are permanent, temporary or employed through agencies, Table 5 shows that workers in the oldest age group (60-75) are least likely to be in permanent employment; with one possible explanation being that as they reached retirement age they may have negotiated their working arrangements with their employers. On the other hand, a small but not negligible proportion of six percent are agency workers (which may denote temporary status), a significantly larger percentage than that observed for the younger two groups (50-54 and 55-59). All these variations are significant, with Pearson's χ^2=169.6, p<0.001; these associations are visualized in Figure 7.

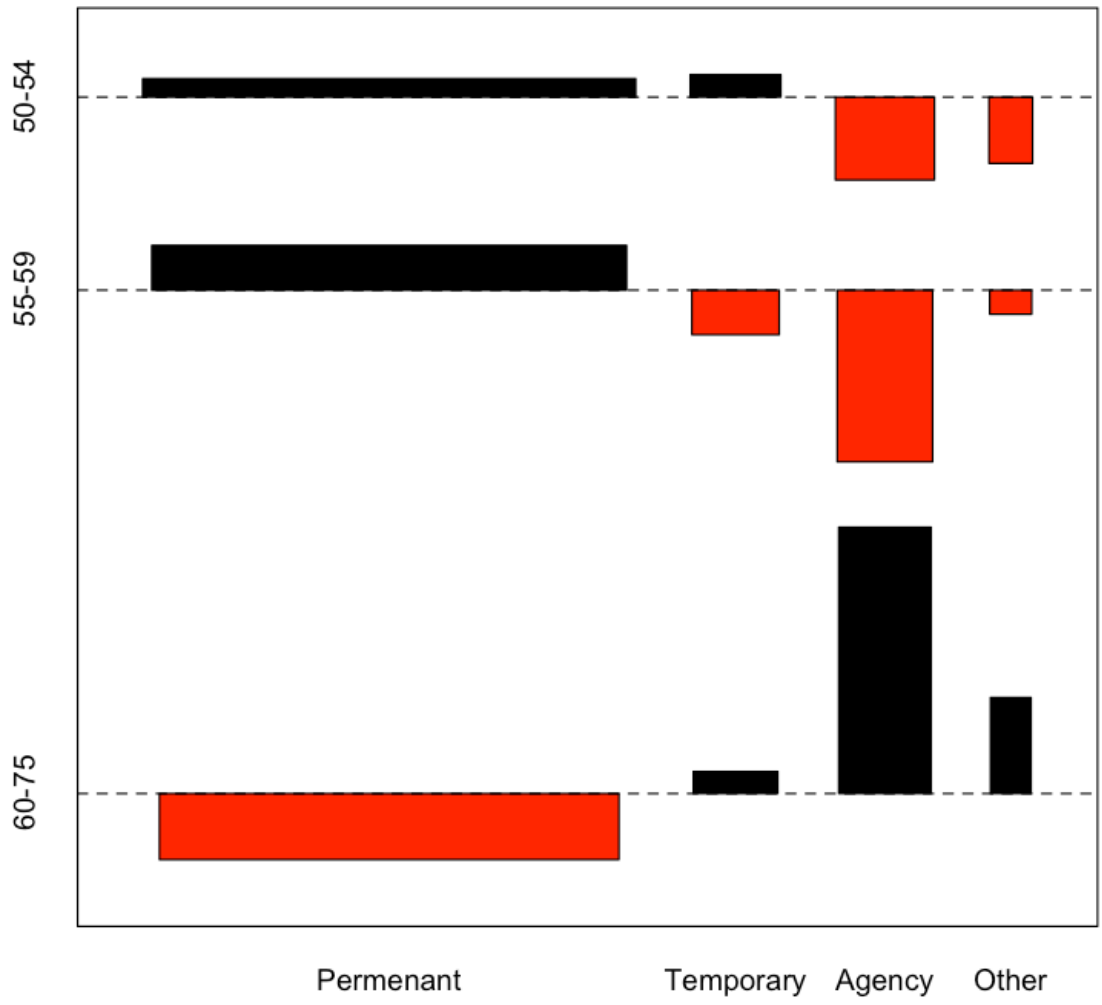
The higher proportion of agency employed older workers (60-75) may raise questions around job (in)security or the desire for flexibility, as well as the possibility of this group being exposed to a number of different employers and work environments. The effect of agency work will be, of course, correlated to specific job roles and is investigated later in this paper.

Table 5 Distribution of 'third age' workers by employment status

Employment status	'Third age' workers		
	50-54	55-59	60-75
Permanent	93.0	94.0	90.0
Temporary	3.3	2.8	3.3
Agency	3.2	2.5	5.7
Other	0.5	0.6	1.0
Number of workers‡	11,923	10,871	10,267

‡ Excluding missing values

Figure 7 Cohen-Friendly association plot between age and employment status



Contracted hours

NMDS-SC contains information on contracted hours. Table 6 presents the mean number of contracted hours by work pattern and age sub-group of 'third age' workers. The data show no significant variation in the mean contracted hours for these three age groups, except for fewer mean hours among 60-75 year-old part-time workers (17% vs. 19% for 50-54 and 55-59). Also, the standard deviation is

similar for all age-groups in the same work pattern, suggesting a similar spread of contracted hours.

Table 6 Mean and standard deviation of contracted hours by age groups and work pattern

Work pattern	Mean contracted hours per week			SD of contracted hours		
	50-54	55-59	60-75	50-54	55-59	60-75
Full-time	31.6	31.9	31.4	12.6	12.1	12.5
Part-time	18.9	18.7	17.4	11.5	11.5	11.2
Neither of these	1.4	2.3	2.0	7.2	8.7	8.3

What do 'third age' workers do?

Table 6 presents the distribution of the three groups of the third age by main current job; while Figure 8 presents the proportions of workers in each sub group by main job role (grouped).[5]

Table 7 Distribution of 'third age' workers by main job role and age sub-groups

Main job role	'Third age' workers		
	50-54	55-59	60-75
Care Worker	46.2	47.0	47.4
Ancillary staff not care-providing	7.4	9.5	12.6
Community Support and Outreach Work	7.2	6.9	7.2
Administrative or office staff not care-providing	5.9	6.1	6.1
Senior Care Worker	4.6	4.2	3.9
Other non-care-providing job roles	2.2	2.2	3.3
Social Worker	4.8	4.2	3.2
Registered Nurse	2.5	1.9	2.7
First Line Manager	4.3	3.7	2.6
Managers and staff in care-related but not care-providing roles	3.2	2.8	2.4
Supervisor	3.2	3.1	2.1
Other job roles	8.5	8.4	6.5
Number of workers	11922	10870	10266

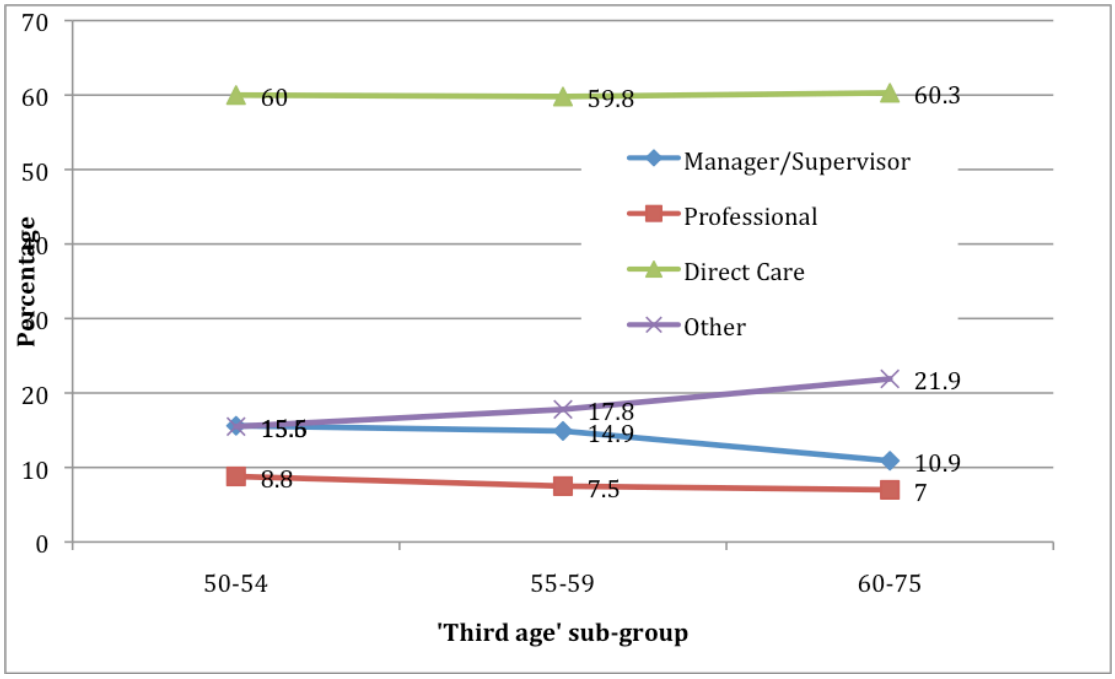
As with all workers, the most prevalent job role among third age workers is 'care worker' (Hussein 2009); however, unlike the general picture across all adult care workers included in the analysis, the next most frequent job among third age workers and in particular those at the top end of the age range (60-75), is

[5] Grouped as: 1. 'Managers/supervisors': senior management, middle management, first line manager, register manager, supervisor, managers and staff in care-related jobs; 2. 'Direct care': senior care worker, care worker, community support, employment support, advice and advocacy, educational support, technician, other jobs directly involving care; 3. 'Professional': social workers, occupational therapists, registered nurse, allied health professional, qualified teacher; 4. 'Other': administrative staff, ancillary staff, and other job roles not directly involving care.

ancillary, non-care providing work. The latter becomes more significant with age to reach a proportion of 12.6 percent of 60-75 year-old workers compared to 7.4 percent among 50-54 year-old workers. On the other hand, the proportion of managers (whether first line mangers or managers in care related roles, as well as supervisors) declines steadily as we move from one age group to an older one, with the lowest proportion among workers of the age 60-75.

Figure 8 shows some interesting, and significant, trends in main job groups as we move across age. Although, at age 50-54, the proportion of workers engaged in professional work equals that working in other 'non-care' jobs; as we move to older age groups a significant divergence occurs. Among the age group 60-75, 22% are working in 'other' jobs while only 11% work in professional jobs. At the same time the proportion of workers in 'direct care' jobs remains identical across ages, while managerial jobs decline, but not dramatically, from 9% to 7% (χ^2=258.2, p<0.001).

Figure 8 Percentages of 'third age' workers in each main job role group by age sub –groups



Within the care sector it appears that direct care workers remain in their jobs as they progress in their third age. However, downward shift in the prevalence of professional and managerial roles as age of workers increase. These may directly relate to the profile of workers who retire at age 60 and whether more professionals prefer to do so than continue working in the care sector. There is also the possibility that managerial roles may become less suitable or desirable if workers wish to shift to more flexible work arrangements. However, the NMDS-SC of course does not contain any information on perceptions of which job roles may be acceptable or suitable for older workers, either among employers, workers or people using social care services. The NMDS-SC allows us to explore and investigate these variations; we can only theorise the reasons behind them.

Work Stability

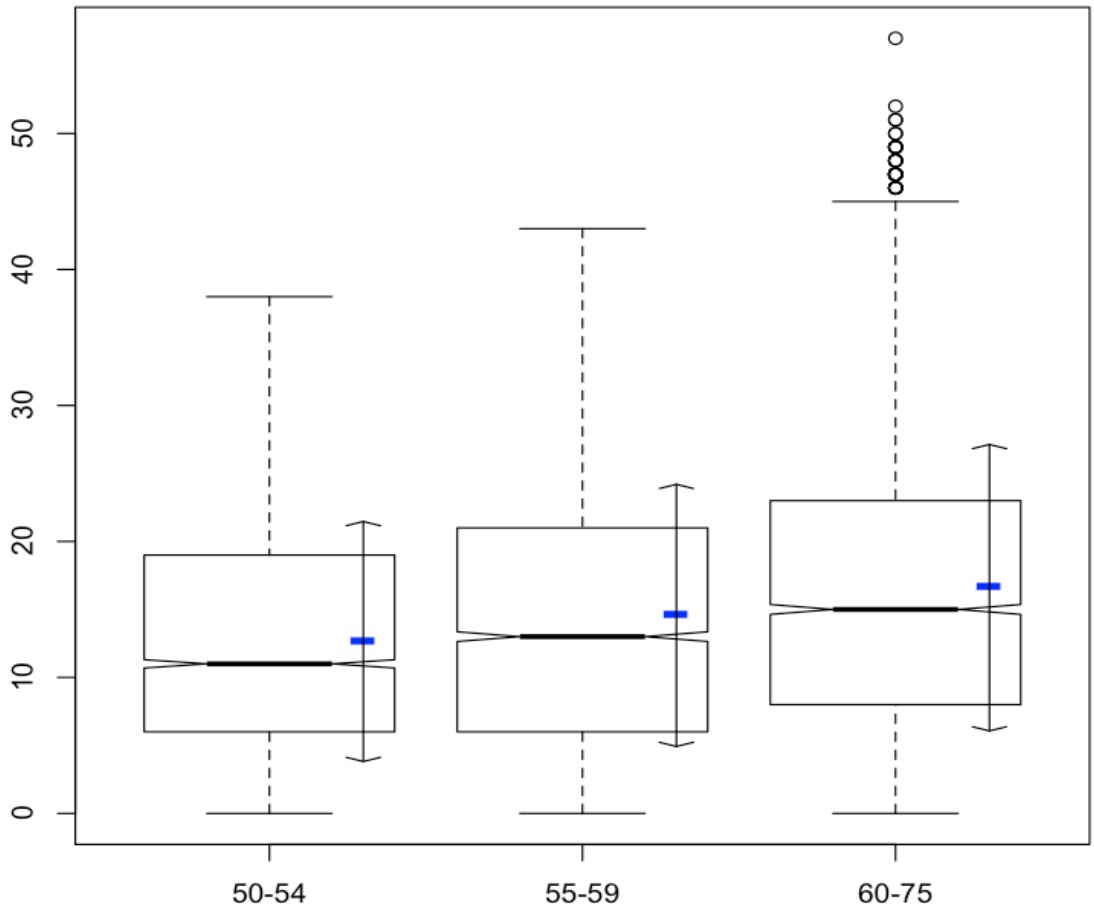
A number of work stability measures exist in the context of the available NMDS-SC data, thus a number of variables can be examined as indicators of employment stability. Three main variables are examined here: the first shows the length of time a worker has been employed in the care sector; the second, the length of time a worker has been with the same employer; and the last, the number of sickness days taken during the past 12 months.

Length of time employed in the care sector

Figure 9 indicates a clear incremental mean and median number of years in the care sector as the age of workers rises. This clearly confirms observations in the literature that the vast majority of older workers in the sector are continuing workers, rather than 'new' workers, or those who were hired recently. Moreover, it indicates a lower likelihood of movement between sectors among older workers in the adult care workforce. The mean time in the sector rises from 12.6 years for those in the age band 50-54, to 14.6 years among the age band 55-59, and 16.6 years among workers aged 60-75.[6] Box-plots and Tukey's notches indicate that these variations are significant (Tukey 1977). These results, along with findings related to job role, may indicate a process of job shifting within the sector, rather than sector shifting, as workers grow older.

[6] Mean and median are calculated for 4,533; 4,426 and 4,221 valid cases for the age groups 50-54, 55-59 and 60-75 respectively.

Figure 9 Box-plot of median time, in years, in sector, with mean and standard deviation by age sub-groups of 'third age' workers



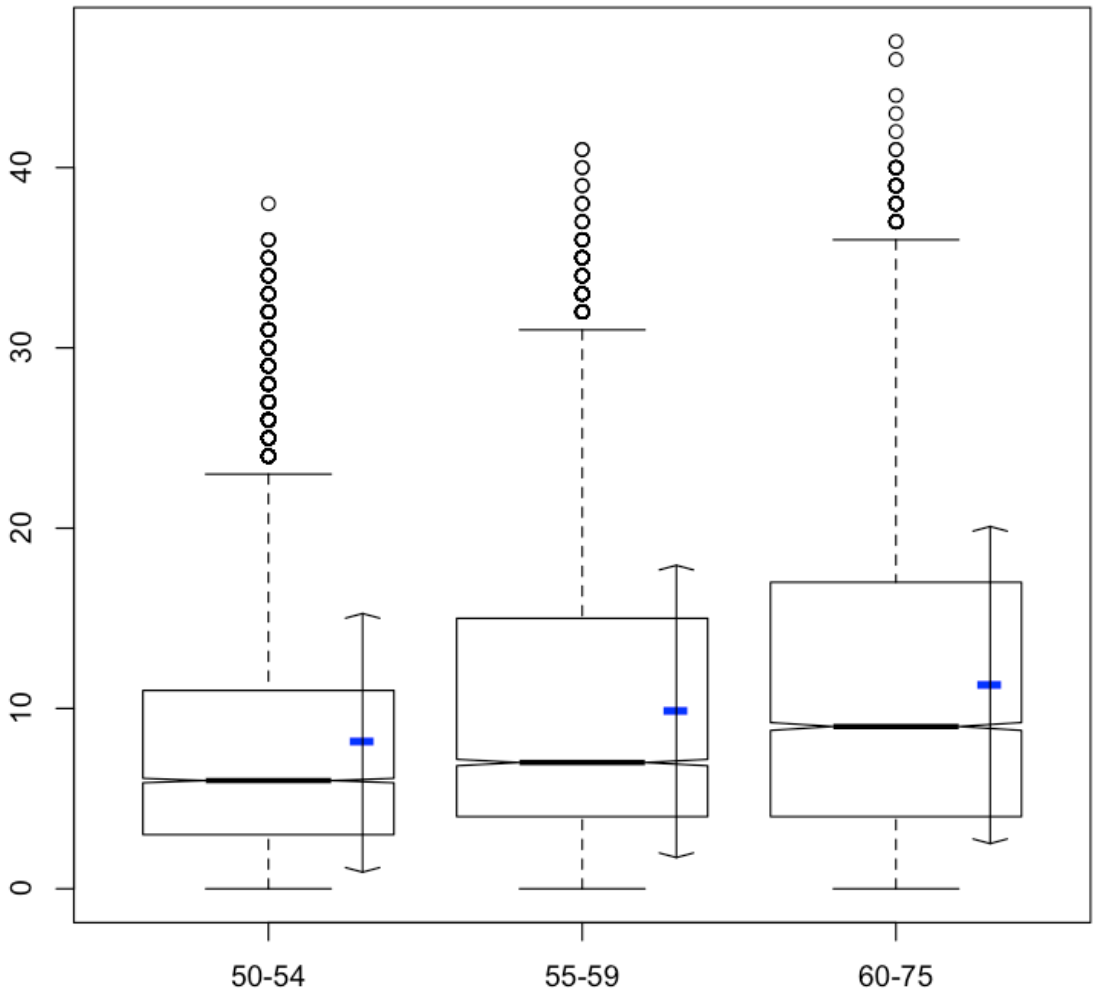
Length of time with current employer

In addition to length of time in the care sector, NMDS-SC provides information on the length of time a worker has spent with the same employer. In our sample, 28,777 records for workers of age 50-75 were used for this analysis.[7]

Figure 10 shows again that as we consider older age groups both the median and mean time with current employer increase. However, the inter-quartile range among the youngest 'third age' group is much narrower than that for the oldest 'third age' group, indicating a wider range of years spent with current employer within the 60-75 age group. The mean time with current employer increases steadily from 8.1 years among workers aged 50-54, to 11.3 among workers in the age band 60-75 years old.

[7] 10,382, 9,521 and 8,874 workers' records for each of 50-54, 55-59 and 60-75 age groups respectively.

Figure 10 Box-plot of median time, in years, in main job role with current employer with mean and standard deviations by 'third age' sub-groups



Sickness days

Calculating mean days sick during the 12 months prior to data collection, the findings show that, on average, there is only a slight increase in sick days amongst the oldest age group (60-75 years) as compared to the 50-54 and 55-59 age groups. The standard deviation is, however, slightly higher among the oldest group, indicating a wide range of sickness leave.

Table 8 Mean days off due to sickness during the past 12 months by age of 'third age' workers

Third age workers	Mean days sick during last 12 months	Standard deviation	Number of workers
50-54	4.6	17.9	11,923
55-59	5.8	21.3	10,871
60-75	5.2	20.7	10,267

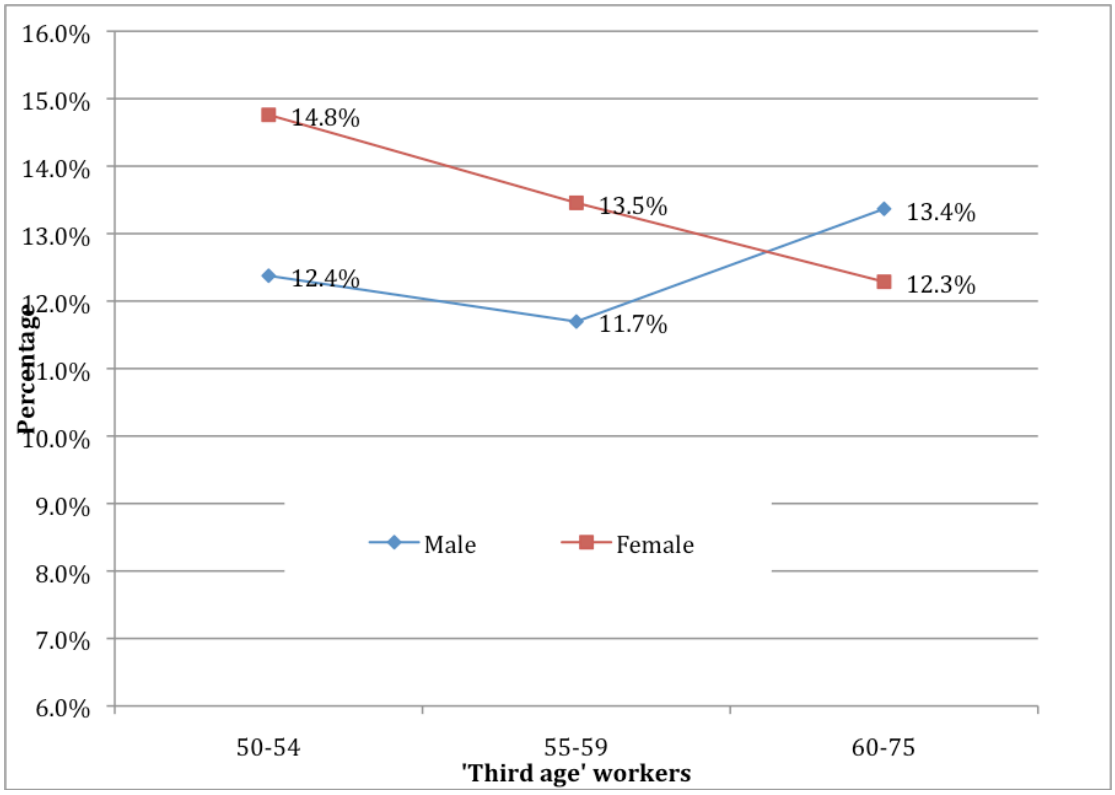
Personal Characteristics of 'third age' workers

The NMDS-SC collects information provided by employers on a number of their workers' personal characteristics. The aim is to use this information to examine any changes in the profile of workers as they enter and go through the third age, in relation to gender, ethnicity, reported disability and highest qualification level. The aim is to test some of the existing literature around groups for whom employment is facilitated as they get older. However, the nature of the care sector and lack of information on socio-economic indicators may make it difficult to draw firm conclusions. Given its status as a secondary labour market, employment in the care sector during the third age may not be synonymous with empowerment and choice, but rather act as an indicator of lack of employment options and poor socio-economic background.

Gender

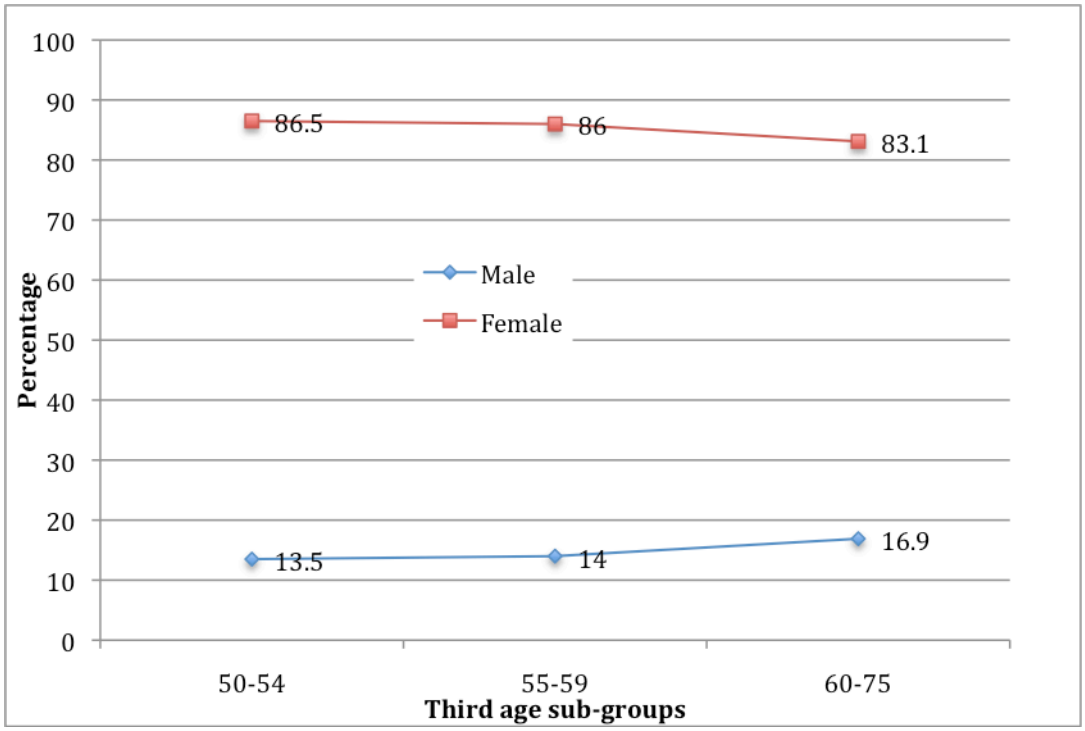
As is well documented, the care sector is gender biased, with the vast majority of workers being female (84% of the care workforce is female, Hussein 2009). However, the proportion of men is significantly higher among those holding managerial roles. In terms of the proportion of male and female 'third age' workers, Figure 11 clearly shows that the proportion of men is greater amongst those aged 60-75, and also shows a shift in age distribution by gender as workers move within the third age stage. The relatively lower representation of women among the 60-75 age group may, of course, be related to the different retirement age for men and women.

Figure 11 Proportions of third age workers among men and women adult care workers



Among third age workers, Figure 12 shows that as age increases the proportion of men significantly increases from 13.5 percent to 16.9 percent (χ^2=54.5, p<0.001). The higher participation of male older workers may relate to a number of factors. Some of these are at a personal level, such as higher levels of autonomy, or greater responsibilities and financial obligations among men; other possible factors operate at employer level. For example, as indicated in some research, older women may be subjected to double jeopardy in respect of both gender and age and may face more significant barriers against continuing their employment into later age than men. However, women may also be more able to give up work if they have alternatives they find more meaningful and a household income on which they can rely. These variations may also relate to the type of job roles performed by older workers (particularly those aged 60-75). Ancillary non-care work is increasingly prevalent amongst this group but may not be as emotionally rewarding as direct care: previous analysis has shown that men are already more represented in this type of work in the sector (Hussein 2009).

Figure 12 Distribution of 'third age' workers by gender



Ethnicity

Figure 13 clearly shows that the oldest group of workers is predominantly 'White'; with a steady and significant decline of workers among all other ethnic groups (χ^2=124.9, p<0.001). Such findings may suggest a selective process as to who stays within, and who leaves, the sector. They may also reflect the well–documented, multiple barriers faced by some BME older workers who wish to retain their employment at older age; and may demonstrate cultural issues around acceptable ages of retirement among different groups. Similarly, they may relate to health status in later life and reflect the health inequalities among older people from different ethnic backgrounds.

Figure 13 Distribution of 'third age' workers by ethnicity and age sub-groups

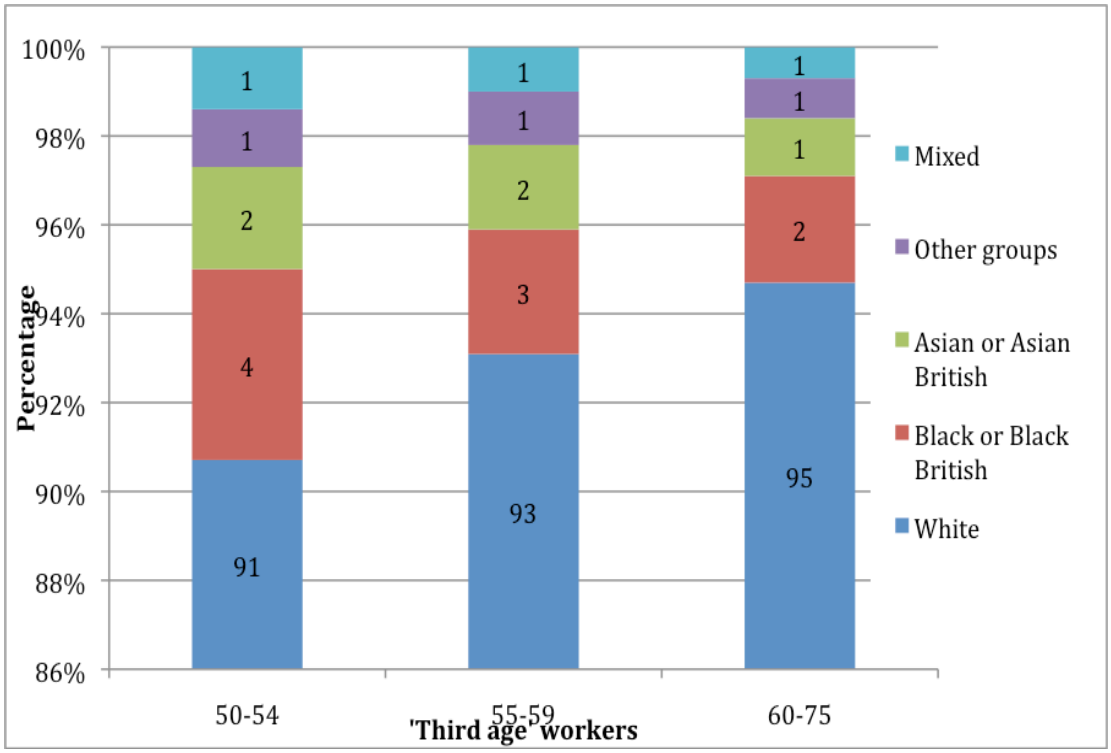


Table 9 highlights these variations, with 14 percent of 'White' workers in the highest age group of 60-75 (43.7% of all White workers are in the third age). Only 4 to 6 percent of workers from other ethnic groups are found within the age group 60-75. Similar variations are observed among the previous cohort, 55-59 years, but to a lesser extent among those aged 50-54 years old. Such stratified participation by age and ethnicity is striking and may relate to both genuine and perceptual factors. As mentioned earlier, both health inequalities and variations in cultural acceptance of work at older ages are evident across different ethnic groups. Additionally, the literature reveals differences in employers' perceptions of workers (in)abilities which may be related to age, gender and ethnicity.

Table 9 Percentages of 'third age' workers at each age sub-group among different ethnic groups

	'Third age' workers		
Ethnic group	50-54	55-59	60-75
White	15.2	14.5	14.0
Mixed	12.9	8.7	5.6
Asian or Asian British	8.9	6.9	4.4
Black or Black British	11.2	6.9	5.5
Other groups	9.8	8.8	6.4

Reported Disability

Only 4 percent of 'third age' workers, in our sample of NMDS-SC, were reported by their employers as having any disability. This proportion is only slightly higher than the 3.5 percent reported for all adult care workers. Moreover, the

analysis shows no significant differences between the three sub-groups of third age workers reported in this analysis (χ^2=3.4, p=0.181).

Highest Qualifications

It is clear from Table 10 that as adult social care workers get older, those with 'other' and the lowest NVQ relevant qualifications are more likely to stay on in work. For example, the percentage of workers with other, non-care related, qualifications increases from 17 percent among the age band 50-54 to 23 percent of those aged between 60 and 75 years old. Similarly, the proportion with NVQ level 4/4+ or equivalent declines from 19 percent of those aged 50-54 to 17 percent of those aged 60-75 (χ^2=157.9, p<0.001). These findings are consistent with the changes observed in main job role amongst older age groups. They may suggest that less qualified workers are likely to stay working in the adult sector when they are aged 60-75 and are also likely to shift job roles from care-related work to ancillary non-care providing work.

Table 10 Distribution of third age workers by highest qualification level and age sub-groups

Highest qualification level	Third age workers		
	50-54	55-59	60-75
Lev2/2+	38.6	40.6	37.7
Lev3/3+	24.9	22.9	22.3
Lev4/4+	19.3	18.1	16.9
Other relevant qualifications	17.1	18.7	23.1
Number of workers[8]	3,827	3,424	2,669

Source of Recruitment

It is evident from the analyses presented in the previous sections that a considerable percentage of third age workers are employed in the adult care workforce. However, there is also clear evidence that these workers are unlikely to have been hired while in their third age. This is consistent with other research indicating that hiring 'older' people for new jobs is infrequent across a number of sectors. To examine this further, NMDS-SC data related to source of recruitment recorded are used to explore any variation in source of recruitment between the three sub-groups of 'third age' workers.

Table 11 indicates some interesting findings. First, the majority of workers from the three sub-groups of 'third age' are recruited from within the care sector. Second, no differences are present in relation to hiring from the retail sector or other sectors (around 4% and 9% of all groups respectively); and similar proportions are indicated for source of recruitment being 'not previously employed' and 'returners' (around 2% and 1% respectively across all age groups). However, there is some evidence that the oldest groups do not receive internal promotion or career development, as the proportion of this group drops from 10 percent among workers aged 50-54 to 8 percent among those of 60-75

[8] Excluding missing values, which includes 'no relevant qualifications' as it is not possible to separate the two groups. Skills for Care is currently working to rectify this miscategorisation.

years old. There also appear to be greater numbers of older workers moving from the health sector into social care. These variations are statistically significant with Pearson's χ^2=64.8 ($p<0.001$). This may reflect the ability of some NHS staff, such as nurses, to retire with NHS pensions under state retirement ages (Watson *et al.* 2005).

Table 11 Distribution of 'third age' workers by source of recruitment as identified by employers and age groups

Source of recruitment	50-54	55-59	60-75
Adult care sector: local authority	27.6	31.1	30.1
Adult care sector: private or voluntary sector	21.7	20.7	19.6
Other sector	8.8	9.4	9.6
Internal promotion or transfer or career development	9.6	9.1	7.7
Health sector	5.3	4.6	6.2
Retail sector	4.1	3.5	3.7
Not previously employed	2.4	2.4	2.4
Children's sector: local authority	1.7	1.5	1.9
Returners	1.1	0.9	1.2
Other sources[9]	17.7	16.7	17.6
Number of workers‡	3,381	3,146	2,967

‡ Excluding missing values

[9] The majority of other sources are unidentified by employers but include negligible proportions of agency, volunteers, from abroad and students' undertaking work experience.

Discussion and Conclusion

This issue of *Social Care Workforce Periodical* provides evidence of the considerable contribution of 'third age' workers to the adult care workforce in England. In particular, the contribution of the oldest 'third age' group, 60-75, is substantial at nearly an eighth, 12.2 percent, of all workers included in a sample of over 80,000 adult care workers. This proportion is higher than that estimated among nurses in England, where the proportion of nurses of ages 50 or more is estimated to be around 30%, but similar to that found among health visitors (Drennan and Davis 2008).

It is clear from several findings that the majority of workers aged 60-75 years are continuing previous employment rather than being newly recruited to the sector or to their current employers. The data show long work histories within the sector and for the current employer, showing great work stability as well as low levels of sick leave. This clear empirical evidence, derived from this major data source, reveals the positive role of the care sector in offering opportunities for workers to continue active employment combined with more flexible work arrangements.

It also appears from the analysis that direct care workers are able to maintain their job roles as they age (60-75). However, there are some observations of declining proportions of professional and managerial roles among the oldest groups of workers. Such observations may hint to possible downward job mobility but may also related to the profile of workers who retire at age 60 and whether professional workers are more likely to retire at this age. It is also possible that certain job roles, such as managerial and supervision, may become less feasible within a more flexible work arrangements preferred by older workers.

There are a number of untested hypotheses that may underlie these observations. There could be issues around perceptions of employers, as well as older workers, in relation to work-load, responsibilities and accountability and their interactions with age. Similarly, there could be perceptions among around the (in)abilities of older workers as well as the levels of risk associated with older workers and professional work provision. Recent research from the US suggests it may be a combination of both these factors but that the latter are possibly more influential (Hwalek *et al.* 2008). However, the NMDS-SC does not include information on perceptions or motivations of workers or employers and these observations will require further investigations.

Third age adult care workers, particularly those in the age range 60-75 years old, are significantly more represented in the voluntary sector (where 14.1% of all workers are aged 60-75) and least represented in the private sector (8.6%). The attraction of the voluntary sector for a wide range of people is well documented (Miligan and Condradson 2006, Baines and Hardill 2008); and employers in the voluntary sector may perhaps be more open to extended employment in older

age. On the other hand, employers in the private sector may be more profit oriented: they may perceive older employees as less productive and staffing ratios may be lower.

The analysis revealed some regional variations in the prevalence of third age workers, with the Midlands containing significantly higher proportions of workers in the age group 60-75. Given that life expectancy in this region is one of the lowest in England and deprivation levels are some of the highest (Doran *et al.* 2006), this raises the question of how to interpret this high participation of older workers in the care sector. The secondary status of the care sector, particularly among less qualified jobs, is well documented. Moreover, older workers, aged 60-75, are more concentrated in low paid work such as ancillary work (cleaning and cooking, for example). One may conclude, therefore, that the high participation of older workers in the Midlands may relate to socio-economic circumstances rather than the choice of people in active third age. However, such assumptions need further examination through tailored research.

Examining the individual profile of older workers, aged 60-75, relative to the two younger cohorts, there seem to be several, complex interactions between age, gender and ethnicity. Male, white workers are significantly over-represented among the 60-75 year age group. Again this may reflect the triple jeopardy faced by female BME older workers, as expressed in much employment research, but may also relate to ethnic health inequalities associated with rising age; and is most likely to indicate a combination of both these factors. The gendered nature of older age employment in the UK is documented in other research (Loretto *et al.* 2005), despite the fact the women are proportionally over-represented in the 'third age' due to their longer life expectancy, in the UK as in many other developed countries. Policy aiming at the active inclusion of older people in employment needs to take into account the interacting dimensions of age, gender and ethnicity.

Analysis of recruitment source data again highlights the fact that the majority of workers in the oldest group (60-75) are continuing employment within the sector, with no apparent increase in the proportions recruited to social care from being unemployed, working in the retail sector or even among people returning to the sector. However, the data indicate a lower prevalence of internal promotions among the oldest group, probably related to the process of downward job mobility that occurs as workers age, whether by choice or otherwise. The low prevalence of internal promotions and career development points to a low level of continuing professional development among older workers: similar phenomena are reported among older nurses and midwives in the NHS (Wray *et al.* 2009).

The current analysis highlights a relatively high prevalence of 'third age' workers in the adult care sector. However, with the secondary position of the care sector in the labour market and the tendency of oldest group of workers to be less qualified than the previous two cohorts, it is hard to interpret the high participation of older workers. This may be a sign of active involvement and choice, with older workers recognizing this as a personally rewarding area of

activity where flexible work is possible, or it may reflect their limited employment choices and their need for additional income or wish for additional pension contributions. Further research is necessary to investigate some of the implications of this research, in light of the interesting findings emerging from this analysis, in order to assist employers in sustaining this valuable element of their workforce.

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Appendix

Box A.1: About NMDS-SC

The NMDS-SC is the first attempt to gather standardized workforce information for the social care sector. It is developed, run and supported by Skills for Care and aims to gather a 'minimum' set of information about services and staff across all service user groups and sectors within the social care sector in England. The NMDS-SC was launched in October 2005, and the online version in July 2007; since then there has been a remarkable increase in the number of employers completing the national dataset.

Two data sets are collected from employers. The first gives information on the establishment and service(s) provided as well as total numbers of staff working in different job roles. The second data set is also completed by employers; however, it collects information about individual staff members. Skills for Care recommends that employers advise their staff they will be providing data through the completion of the NMDS-SC questionnaires. No written consent from individual members of staff is required, however, ethnicity and disability are considered under the Data Protection Act to be *'sensitive personal data'*, thus it is recommended that consent for passing on these two items needs to be explicit. For further details on NMDS-SC please visit http://www.nmds-sc-online.org.uk/

The NMDS-SC has provided the sector with a unique data set, providing information on a number of the workforce characteristics. However, it is important to highlight the emerging nature of the NMDS-SC, mainly due to the fact that data have not been completed by *'all'* adult social care employers in England, at this stage. Therefore, some of the findings may be under- or over-represented as a result of this. It is also equally important to bear in mind that data are completed by employers and not workers. This may also prompt some technical considerations when interpreting the findings. *Social Care Workforce Periodical* will address such considerations in relevant discussions of findings.

About

The *Social Care Workforce Periodical* (SCWP) is a regular web-based publication, conducted and published by the Social Care Workforce Research Unit, King's College London. SCWP aims to provide timely and up-to-date information on the social care workforce in England. In each issue, one aspect of the workforce is investigated through the analysis of emerging quantitative workforce data to provide evidence-based information that relates specifically to the social care workforce in England. The purpose is to share emerging findings with the social care sector to help improve workforce intelligence. Such updates are useful in highlighting specific issues for further analysis and to inform workforce policy. The first few issues of *Social Care Workforce Periodical* will provide in-depth analyses of the latest versions of the National Minimum Data Set in Social Care (NMDS-SC). We would welcome any suggestions on topics for inclusion in future issues. For further information and suggestions please contact Dr Shereen Hussein; email: shereen.hussein@kcl.ac.uk; phone: + (44) (0) 207 848 1669.

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